



National Week of Service

Dear SkillsUSA Members:

SkillsUSA's national headquarters is pleased to provide you with the SkillsUSA National Week of Service Event Planning Kit.

SkillsUSA students are committed to serving their communities and helping those less fortunate. Chapters across the country organize community service events and projects. These events typically are held at different times during the school year.

We are asking all chapters nationwide to publicize their events during the week of May 2-8, 2011. The reason for this is twofold. First, we hope to commemorate the anniversary of SkillsUSA's founding. Second, we hope to harness the power of our combined efforts — to showcase not only the good work being done by our student members, but also to bring attention to career and technical education and the value of SkillsUSA.

Event Planning Step-by-Step Guide

We want your event, and the hundreds of others across the country, to be successful and fun; that's why we've put together some helpful materials to guide you through. Keep in mind, this is simply a guide to help you plan. Your event may not need all of the elements found in the kit, so feel free to adapt these materials to your event.

Please be sure to let us know about your event. We can help promote only those events that we're aware of. We're asking advisors to send an e-mail to nclausen@skillsusa.org with a brief description of your chapter's event. Just let us know in a paragraph or two what your chapter is doing during the week of May 6-12 to help your community and you'll receive a gift.

Start planning your SkillsUSA National Week of Service project today!

Sincerely,

Tim Lawrence
SkillsUSA Executive Director

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DEFINING YOUR EVENT

Decide on what kind of community service event your chapter will hold.

The community service event you hold should be suited to your individual chapter and community. But you might consider the following questions to help you through the decision-making process. We've also provided a few typical answers, but of course these are by no means the only answers!

Why is our chapter organizing a community service event?

- To do good and necessary work in our community
- To raise awareness of SkillsUSA and career and technical education (CTE)

What do we hope to accomplish?

- To help our neighbors
- To encourage young people to join SkillsUSA or enroll in CTE

What kind of event or activities can best achieve this?

- Events that help us showcase our career and technical skills
- Events that are fun

Who can help us pull the event together?

- Local businesses, news media, volunteers, parents, sponsors, teachers

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY SERVICE EVENTS HELD BY SKILLSUSA CHAPTERS

There is no limit to what you can do! SkillsUSA community service events are as varied as SkillsUSA members, as this list shows:

- “We currently have an all-school Community Service Day (in fact, it lasts two days) every year where our students offer to the senior citizens in our community several different services: tire rotation and changing, blood pressure checks, Internet usage, dinner, bingo, manicures, etc., held at our technical center.”
- “We do a service project called 'focus208.' In this project, the students donate their photos to the Canyon County Historical Society to become a part of their permanent archives. We use that day to donate the photos and help with making them part of the archives, by labeling and filing, then volunteering for the rest of the time.”
- “We washed windows of parked cars and left a card that we had been there. We also collected a bunch of food coupons and sorted them, then sent a group of kids to different stores and they taped them to the items. A sign on the door let people know where they came from.”
- “In our community, we have a Girl Scout camp that is located on a lake. This facility needs attention each year, so our school helped with cleanup and maintenance.”
- “I have several drafting students who are already donating their drafting expertise in community service projects. This is an ongoing part of my SkillsUSA drafting [chapter].”

Currently, we are designing a community memorial building for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, creating as-builts for the Local United Way, developing working drawings for Habitat for Humanity, making site plans for our local school district, and [conducting] two other private projects in connection with local architects. All of these items are per-gratis. I firmly believe that community service is based on the value it has to the recipient and the giver. Knowledge and skill are the most valuable assets that we can give away. My students do this regularly.”

- “Our state officers annually select a charity with which we will partner. We have done this with the American Cancer Society, Make-A-Wish, the Food Bank, the Sharing Network (organ donors), Special Olympics, Ronald McDonald House (currently) and others. Every year it gives us a chance to create new partnerships, and we get to work with the corporate sponsors as well. This has led to donations and technical support for the SkillsUSA Championships.”
- Other event ideas include cleanup projects at local parks, repair projects, nursing home visits or pet therapy days, creating personal care kits, serving meals to shut-ins, organizing a walk-a-thon for a local charity, conducting grooming and appearance workshops for youth in job-training programs, conducting after-school learning programs for elementary children, organizing a literacy program for children and adults, helping disabled or senior citizens around their homes, and conducting a community workshop on employability skills learned through SkillsUSA.

PLANNING YOUR COMMUNITY SERVICE EVENT

Once you have a clear idea of your purpose, you can begin planning an event that will help you accomplish what you’ve set out to achieve.

Details, details, details

Form an event committee

An involved committee will help take on the workload. Be sure every committee member has clear roles, responsibilities and knows his or her deadlines. Put someone in charge of the following:

- Finding a location or site for your event
- Getting prizes, giveaways or equipment donated for your event
- Arranging for food or refreshments
- Recruiting volunteers or participants
- Cleaning up after your event
- Finding sponsors and developing partnerships
- Handling publicity

Contingency planning

No one likes to think about the negative things that can happen at an event, but you have a responsibility to plan for it, just in case. Don’t overlook things that are out of your control, like weather or health emergencies, and make sure you have a plan to address them.

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Weather — If weather can affect your event, plan to have a rain date or an inside location as a backup. Set a time with the members of your chapter event planning committee when you can call “go or no go” because of bad weather. Establish a telephone tree to get the decision out, and make sure you contact local radio stations to announce necessary cancellations.

Permits — If your county or city requires permits for special events, be sure you have filled out the necessary paperwork beforehand. You wouldn’t want your event canceled on account of a technicality.

Safety issues — Be sure to make safety an utmost concern, but accidents do happen. Be sure you have a plan in place to handle an emergency. Identify the nearest hospital. Have a well-stocked first aid kit. You might want to let your local fire department know about your event.

Insurance and release forms — Check to see if your school’s insurance covers your event or if a release form must be signed by participants. Your principal will know whether an off-campus event is also covered.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

We encourage you to form partnerships with local businesses and news media that fit your community service goals. It’s a win-win situation because both your chapter and your partner will be serving the community while bringing attention to your efforts.

What is a partner?

A partner organization can be a local business that shares your mission of increasing interest in your chapter’s CTE experience. Your business partner can provide goods, services, volunteers or other resources to support your event and chapter. The impact of your combined efforts will be magnified tenfold. All in all, your business partner should benefit from its affiliation with your event and chapter.

A partner can also be a member of your local news media. Most every media outlet has a community affairs director and a commitment to community service. They are often looking to partner with organizations that are doing good work. Ask them to send a team of volunteers to the event and bring a camera crew or photographer. Often media partners will assign reporters to participate in community service events. These assignments are fun for the reporters, result in very entertaining stories, and fulfill the media’s community outreach goals.

Benefits of partnering

Engaging partners who can support your event in a variety of ways increases your chance for success. Think about all the ways your event can benefit from partnerships. Some short-term benefits might include publicity for your event, increased event participation, a newfound volunteer source, financial support and increased credibility for your event. In the long term, partnerships can help your chapter connect the community to the important contributions of CTE and SkillsUSA — as well as strengthen relationships with others in your community who will support the goals of your chapter for years to come.

Some tips on developing partnerships

Contact potential partners as early as possible. There are many ways to develop partnerships for your community service effort. Here is a suggested approach:

- Determine your goals for the community service event. What businesses or organizations in your community share your goals and could benefit from an association with your event? Think about how this relationship could help now and in the future.
- List the benefits your organization can bring to potential partners. Then list and prioritize possible partners based on your needs.
- Prepare a simple fact sheet outlining your current needs for the event. Include information about SkillsUSA and an overview about your chapter.
- Call your potential business or media partner and request a meeting. Your chapter advisor should attend the meeting with you. This can be an effort that really pays off in unexpected ways. Be flexible and open to possibilities.
- Once you agree on areas of mutual benefit, formalize your partnership with a letter of agreement.
- Keep your business/media partners involved in the planning of your community service day, and keep them excited about what you are doing together.
- Invite them to participate in the community service day.

A little appreciation

Send a thank-you letter to your business and media partners once the event is over. You can also send a certificate of appreciation. Don't forget to mention your partners should you be interviewed by the media. Following your community service event, meet with your partners to thank them and to get their feedback. Should everyone agree the partnership was a success, consider asking them to partner with you again for next year's community service event.

PUBLICIZING YOUR EVENT

SkillsUSA offers its members a special opportunity to get involved during the 2012 SkillsUSA National Week of Service. To ensure each chapter's success, we provide all the materials you need to publicize your day of service. You can customize any of the materials to advertise your local event.

Tell us about your event.

The national office of SkillsUSA is dedicated to promoting community service events nationwide, but we can only promote those events we know about. That's why it's important to let us know about your event. Simply send an e-mail to nclausen@skillsusa.org with a brief description of your event, and we'll begin compiling a list so that we can promote projects to the national news media. You will receive a gift.

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WORKING WITH THE NEWS MEDIA

Why should our chapter involve the news media?

In addition to the placement of public service announcements (free advertising), editorial coverage is a great way to get the message out to the public about your day of community service. By investing a little extra time, effort and planning — and most importantly, very little or no money — you can execute an effective media campaign promoting your event. Make media relations an integral part of your community service day planning, and your event will surely be a success. Below are some simple instructions on how you can use the media to garner attention for your event and your organization.

Who do I contact?

Look at newspapers, and listen to TV and radio news and public affairs programs to identify the reporters who would cover your event, most likely those who have an interest in education and business issues. Or get out the Yellow Pages, check the Web and call each newspaper and TV and radio station in your area. Make sure your list includes the reporter's name, media outlet, title, phone, fax and e-mail address.

Contact the media outlet and ask the following questions:

- Who should receive news releases pertaining to local student events? Who should receive community bulletin board announcements?
- What deadlines do you have for news and community bulletin board events?

- When do you make your decisions about covering news events?
- When you cover events, do you have special needs for television cameras, sound and photo opportunities?

What do I tell them?

Remember, they can't cover it without all the details. Wait to make phone calls or send out news releases until all logistics, such as place, time, date and spokespersons, have been confirmed. When inviting reporters to cover your day of community service, make sure the time and location are clear, and the location is easily accessible. Provide directions and parking suggestions if necessary. Be a good host — start your event on time.

Do I need a spokesperson?

Be sure to designate one or two people as spokespeople for the day's event. Typically these will be your chapter leadership and your teacher/advisor. Make sure that these people are comfortable speaking in front of a camera. They should know as much as possible about your event, your CTE program skills and SkillsUSA. You might also consider as a spokesperson your business partner or a representative of where the community service day project is taking place.

Once you have completed your media list and confirmed all of your event details, media advisories and news releases may be used to alert your media contacts to story opportunities.

A media advisory invites media to an upcoming event. Keep it short and simple. Include a catchy lead sentence detailing why the community service day is important with enough infor-

mation to catch the reporter's attention. Answer the "five Ws": who, what, when, where and why. For television crews, be sure to include the part of your event that will provide the best visual for their cameras. Send your advisory two weeks before your event. Make follow-up phone calls a day or two before your event.

News releases generate interest among the media about the release contents. They generate curiosity and inspire further questions by reporters. Make your release brief, interesting, timely and include a local angle. Begin with a short, attention-grabbing news hook in the first paragraph. Include a quote and explain the event or project as accurately as possible. Limit releases to a page or two. Include the names and phone numbers of your spokespeople who can give an interview and answer questions.

Other tips for successful media relations:

- Keep up-to-date media lists. Personalize your materials as much as possible.
- Only contact the media with newsworthy story ideas.
- Contact them in advance of events.
- When contacting reporters, be aware of their deadlines. Mornings are usually the best time to contact them.
- When speaking to reporters, be brief and stick to the point. And be courteous.
- Know your subject matter and anticipate questions.
- Have a media sign-in sheet at your event so you'll know who attended for follow-up purposes.
- Have additional background information, such as SkillsUSA brochures and fact sheets, available.
- Display a SkillsUSA banner and wear SkillsUSA attire, if it's appropriate. Keep an eye out for articles that may be published about your event and collect them for your files. Be sure to fax or e-mail copies to SkillsUSA national office to the attention of Tom Holdsworth (703-777-8999, tholdsworth@skillsusa.org) so media coverage nationwide can be reviewed.

Interview Tips

If at all possible, prepare your spokesperson to remember these tips during media interviews:

- SkillsUSA members have a great story to tell. Be sure to tell the media how you are using your skills and leadership to help make a difference in your community.
- Always remain genuinely polite, honest and helpful.
- Give positive and helpful answers; avoid negative words or criticism of others.
- If asked a question about a topic you're not familiar with or do not have the answer to, simply say so.
- Give facts; do not speculate.
- Never say, "No comment." Such a reply comes across as evasive and sounding guilty. Keep your personal viewpoints personal.

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PLACING A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA)

What is a PSA?

Public service announcements (PSAs) are non-commercial announcements that benefit their intended audience, rather than the company that created them. For example, a PSA that provides career and technical education information differs from a paid ad that promotes a particular product or business. Most PSAs are produced by nonprofit organizations, but commercial, for-profit organizations may also use them to promote nonprofit activities and events.

Newspapers and magazines often have unsold advertising space, which is sometimes filled with print PSAs. Consider asking one of your business partners to underwrite or use their resources to design a print PSA for your event. Often they will have a bit of pull with a newspaper with which they already have an established advertising relationship. Radio and television PSAs often are used by local stations as part of a community calendar, or when there is spare broadcast time.

Why should I try to place a PSA?

Because free publicity is a good thing! News outlets are always looking for fresh, timely stories to report, especially at the local level. This will not only promote your day of community service, but it could also help to secure additional media coverage of the event itself.

What types of PSAs are available to me to promote my day of community service?

This year, SkillsUSA is providing you with live-read radio PSAs to promote your community service event. This should be customized with your local information so you can build on the momentum created by the 2012 SkillsUSA

National Week of Service.

:60 (seconds)

May 8 is the anniversary of the founding of SkillsUSA, and during the surrounding week, May 2 through 8, SkillsUSA student members across the country are coming together to perform local community service projects.

SkillsUSA National Week of Service showcases the skills students learn through career and technical education, and shines a spotlight on SkillsUSA's dedication to serving others while creating tomorrow's leaders.

Here in [your town], SkillsUSA students from [your school] will [brief description here of your event] on [date, time]. Join them as they work together to make a difference. Volunteers are needed, so call [your contact info here] for more information.

:30 (seconds)

May 8 is the anniversary of the founding of SkillsUSA, and during the surrounding week, May 6 through 12, SkillsUSA student members across the country are coming together to perform local community service projects. SkillsUSA National Week of Service will be celebrated here in [your community] as local

SkillsUSA students from [your school] [your event description here] on [date, time]. Volunteers are needed, so call [your contact info here] for more information.

:15 (seconds)

SkillsUSA National Week of Service will be celebrated here in [your town] as local SkillsUSA students from [your school] [brief sentence about your event] at [event location] on [date, time]. Call [your contact info here] for more information.

FIVE EASY STEPS TO PLACING YOUR CUSTOMIZED PSA

By customizing the PSAs provided and giving them to your local media, you encourage maximum audience participation on the day of community service. The process is an easy one if you follow these simple steps:

1. Make a list

Use your media list, if you have one, or a phone book or Internet directory to identify all local print outlets, television stations and radio stations. Include daily and weekly newspapers, local magazines, community and ethnic papers, newsletters and shoppers' guides. Also, be sure to include community-based local access cable stations.

2. Call the right person

Call each outlet and ask if they run PSAs. If they do, ask for the name of the director of community affairs or public service, or the person to send a PSA. For publications, call the advertising display department (not the classified advertising department) and find out who handles donated space.

3. Write a letter/email

Write to the appropriate person, ask them to run the PSA, and explain why it would benefit the community. Make sure to include your name, school affiliation and a telephone number with the best times to reach you.

Enclose or attach camera-ready copies of your PSA with your letter.

Make sure to allow enough time before the event: three to four weeks lead time is best. Let them know the timing of your community service project and, ideally, when you would like your PSA to run.

4. Follow-up

Call your contacts at each news outlet a few days after sending the letter or e-mail. Ask if it was received and if they are willing to consider running the PSA. Remember to be brief and polite.

5. Say "thank you"

Make sure to thank the outlets that run the PSA with a letter. Let them know you appreciate the part they played in promoting the 2011 SkillsUSA National Week of Service.

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CREATE AN EVENT WEB PAGE

Dedicating a Web page to your event is a great way to publicize and increase the awareness of your day of community service.

More and more people are turning to the Internet to plan their schedules. By dedicating a page of your school's website to your event, you'll attract more people to the event and answer any questions they might have.

Here are some useful tips to help you with your Web communications. Be sure to include the following information on your event Web page:

- Date and time of the community service project
- Event location with detailed instructions on how to get there, including parking recommendations
- Detailed description of the event and what attendees can expect to find when they get there (Make this copy fun and interesting to encourage more people to attend.)
- A general phone number and email address where people can call/write with questions
- Links to event partners' websites
- A link to *www.skillsusa.org/events/service.shtml*

Be sure to add your event website's address to all of your marketing materials, including fliers, brochures, posters and press releases. You'll want to drive all available traffic to this page. Remember, the SkillsUSA national headquarters can't help you publicize your event along with all the others unless we know about it. Please let us know what you've done so we can promote it to national media. Send a brief report to nclausen@skillsusa.org about your community service activities held during the week of May 6-12. Just let us know in a paragraph or two about what your chapter is doing to help your community and receive a gift.